

Joe Bustillos  
Daily Titan  
72 lines

Album reviews: Janet Jackson 'Rhythm Nation 1814' (A&M Records)  
and Tears For Fears 'The Seeds of Love' (PolyGram Records).

One of the burdens of success for recording artists is repeating that success with their next album. While one would not naturally place Janet Jackson and Tears For Fears in the same musical category, both have released follow-up albums to their respective highly successful last LPs. For Jackson and Tears For Fears, the answer to whether they were able to accomplish their task is a resounding "mostly."

Jackson again teamed up with Minneapolis sound gurus Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis to produce the patented dance tracks and technology-laden hooks. New this time out is the more prominent computer "Bobby Brown/New Edition" machine-gun drumming and vocal sampling that has come into vogue since her last LP. Also new is an expanding awareness toward social issues.

While the dance songs such as "Miss You Much" and "Rhythm Nation" may become the most popular tracks on the album, the most noteworthy song is the ballad "Livin' In A World (They Didn't Make)." No doubt inspired by the recent shooting of five children on a Northern California school playground, "Livin' In A World" softly laments the senselessness of the victims' deaths before shoving our faces aurally in the graphic carnage of it. Getting one emotionally chocked up is not the normal fare on a dance LP. Jackson should be applauded for getting "nasty" with these issues without trivializing it or pasting over it with some fantasy-derived answer (a la brother Michael's "Smooth Criminal" video).

Speaking of trivia, the numbers "1814" in the album title and splashed around in photographs and videos associated with the LP seem to refer to slave revolts in the Caribbean in the year 1814, according to an unidentified A&M records spokeswoman. This has not been confirmed with Jackson. A&M president Gil Friesen said that he had no idea what the numbers meant.

One of the difficult tasks of a dance dominated LP is arranging the order of the songs so that the album doesn't feel like one long drum solo. Jackson and team successfully used brief musical and

*Can you really  
patent them?*

*I sure would —  
mindless  
obscure*

*save axe*

*It's  
Satan's  
occult  
security  
number*

spoken interludes between the first several dance songs to keep the sometimes-similar songs from running together---an effective technique. Unfortunately, they didn't employ any such technique with the concluding three slow songs. Consequently these songs seem to run together and lose their artistic import and individuality. Moving any one of the songs into a different slot would have helped to maintain the otherwise satisfying symmetry of the album.

Finding their own musical slot was the reason that Tears For Fears took so long in getting "The Seeds of Love" out, according to Keyboardist Roland Orzabel and bassist Curt Smith. So after four long years TFF has returned with a more "organic" band sound than the previous technology-soaked "Songs from the Big Chair." Because "The Seeds of Love" has a broader-based sound, Orzabel said ~~that~~ many of their fans will probably have a hard time getting into it. Not exactly a positive attitude with which to introduce four years worth of work but then TFF is not a particularly happy-go-lucky English duo.

Ever serious and message-conscious, Tears For Fears tackled the cultural whitewashing of the Third World ("Standing on the Corner of the Third World"), women's rights ("Woman in Chains"), and the bomb ("Year of the Knife"). What works best on the LP are the richly textured opening three songs: "Woman in Chains," "Badman's Songs," and the Sgt. Pepper-sounding anti-Thatcher "Sowing the Seeds of Love." Contributing heavily to the soulful feel of the first two songs is American female vocalist and pianist Oleta Adams. Adams was discovered during TFF's last U.S. tour crooning away in a Holiday Inn piano lounge.

crooning  
away??

The remaining five tracks of the LP are not exactly throw-aways but they lack a certain attractiveness or catchiness (terms that sound like typical recording industry fodder). ~~What I mean is that~~ casual one-time-through listeners will most likely lose interest before they reach "Famous Last Words" because the songs sound similar enough to tend to run together (the last three seem to be thematically linked). They could have used some of Jackson's spare interludes to keep the listeners from falling asleep. An unfortunate fate for the last half of the album---especially after four years worth of work---those last cuts are most like the previous LP's songs in their introspection and intelligence.

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